



Department of Justice

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FORMER STATE DEPARTMENT CHIEF CONSULAR OFFICER PLED GUILTY TO RECEIVING ILLEGAL BENEFITS FROM FOREIGN NATIONALS

WASHINGTON, DC—Christopher A. Wray, Assistant Attorney General for the Criminal Division of the U.S. Department of Justice, and Joe Morton, Acting Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of Diplomatic Security, U.S. Department of State, announced today that Patricia Raikes, a former State Department employee and former Chief Consular Officer at the United States Embassy in Beirut, Lebanon, pled guilty to a one count information charging her with a conflict of interest in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Sections 209 and 216. The Honorable Ricardo M. Urbina of the United States District Court for the District of Columbia set Raikes' sentencing for August 16, 2005.

According to the plea documents, Raikes, as Chief Consular Officer, was responsible for oversight of the full range of consular activities at the U.S. Embassy in Lebanon, including the issuance of visas and the enforcement of established embassy regulations. From 1999 through 2001, while serving as Chief Consular Officer, Raikes received thousands of dollars of benefits from foreign businesspeople in the form of paid airline travel and hotel stays for Raikes and her family members. After receiving these benefits, Raikes subsequently issued and/or approved more than 35 visa applications submitted or referred by the aforementioned foreign businesspeople. The plea documents further stated that many of the individuals who received visas issued and/or approved by Raikes were in fact ineligible to have received tourist visas under the then-existing embassy policy.

This matter was handled by Trial Attorneys Peter R. Zeidenberg and Sabrina A. Houlton of the Public Integrity Section, headed by Section Chief Noel L. Hillman. This matter was investigated by the Diplomatic Security Service.

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